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A Thanks giving  
**SERMON**

O N T H E

23 of *August*, 1705.

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*K Fiddes*  
A Discourse showing that God in  
the Government of the World  
Acts by particular Wills.

By *D<sup>r</sup> R. Fiddes.*

Y O R K.

Printed, by *John White*, for *Francis  
Hildyard* Book-seller in *Stone-gate*,  
and are to be Sold by *Thomas Ben-  
net* in *London*. 1705.

A Thanks giving  
SERMON

ON THE

23 of August 1707.



A Discourse of the Government of the World  
As by particular Wills.

Y O R K

Printed by John White, for Francis  
Widdow Book-Seller in Stone-  
gate and to be sold by Thomas Bar-  
net in London 1707.

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To

*Sr. Richard Osbaldeston Knight.*

SIR.

**I** was at once Prevail'd with to make this Sermon publick, and Determin'd in the choice of your Patronage; not that I have any thing to say in behalf of the Performance, but that 'tis well and Piously design'd. I have Endeavour'd to Vindicate, and Establish a truth, of great Importance to Religion, and which has a direct Influence upon the Practis of it; were Authority of any Weight in Disquisitions of this Nature, I should have been silent in an Argument, wherein I dissent from Monsieur Malebranch, who has defended his Opinion with that moving force and Penetration of thought, which is peculiar to him, and whose very Escapes are Entertaining above all things in the World to those who do not prefer truth above every thing, but I follow no Man, nor any number or Distinction of Men, against the Evidence of things, or what I apprehend to be so.

And therefore, Sr. I would not Entitle any thing in the following Discourse to your Protection, any further than you judge it Reasonable; not Excepting what I have offer'd, by way of Inference in Relation to the Church of England. Tho I know there is no Gentleman in the Communion of it more Sincerely desires to see it upon a lasting Foundation of Peace and Security.

Yet I hope my Zeal for its Service, has not carry'd me, beyond the Bounds of Decency. 'Tis hard under Violent and publick provocations, in things, which affect us in our nearest Interests, and most tender Passions, to observe a Temper; But nothing is Impossible to the ingenuity of that Spirit, which Actuates all the true Members of the Church; and which the Charitable

Principle, that runs through all her Doctrines, and the Candor of her Discipline, have so Peculiar a Tendency to Inspire.

Your Sentiments in favour of so excellent a Constitution are founded upon reason, but 'tis your happiness too that they descend to you by Inheritance, and that you have been all along confirm'd in them, by two powerfull and living Examples; we ought to follow no Precedents against the light of our own minds, but 'tis the Glory of a Gentleman to maintain the Character of his Family, in a just and Reasonable conduct; did not the Name you derive from your worthy Father oblige you to such a Conduct, you cannot forget your Relation to that of Wentworth.

Were I not resolved to Transgress against the Ordinary Rules of Addresses in this kind, I should Represent you in those other Qualifications which render you so happy in the Esteem and love of your Country; A just return for your faithful, and Constant Applications, in all the Capacities you Serve it.

But tho you will not permit me to pursue this Subject, the motives to Gratitude, from my own particular Obligations are Invincible. I cannot stifle or forget them, while I Remember I am a Christian. Next to the pious Office and Honour you did me, at my Baptism into the Christian Truth, and the purest Communion of it, I Embrace this publick Occasion of thanking you, for the Particular care you took, to see me confirm'd in them. Would all Gentlemen consider their Obligations under the same trust, there might be hopes of bringing the People to some sense of a Duty, which they Engage themselves in the most Solemn manner to perform, for after all the schemes of Reformation, the Examples of Persons of Distinction, will most Effectually Recommend Religion to the World: Her Majesty was sensible of this when she took up that noble Resolution of Honouring none, but Persons of known Principles and Probity, with her Distinguishing Favours: The Thoughts of Men are Generally so taken up, with what comes in the way of their Senses, and so little Accustom'd to abstract Reasoning, that Naked Truth Operates but very slowly upon them; the proper way of Instructing them is by sensible

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*Arguments, by showing them Vertue Alive, and in Motion, and by drawing the Rules of Religion before them, as it were in Colours.*

*'Tis to be attributed to the Influence of your own, and your Family's Example, in a constant and devout Attendance on God's Publick worship, that you have the happiness to see every Lord's-day, and on all other Occasions, one of the most Regular and Conformable Congregations, that I know, for the Quality of it-*

*For I speak nothing Sr. but upon my Knowledge and Observation, Flattery is a Vice, which almost all Dedications disclaim and are full of, but a Clergyman ought to disclaim his Character, that incurs the Imputation of it, there is nothing more my Aversion, or which I am confident you wou'd be less dispos'd to Pardon, and therefore I hope you will believe me, in all Sincerity.*

S I R,

Your most faithful Obedient Servant,

Richard Fiddes.

arguments by showing them better things, and in relation, and  
by drawing the Rules of Religion before them, as it will be in

Colours.

It is to be attributed to the influence of your own, and your  
Family's Example, in a constant and honest attendance on  
God's Publick worship, that you have the happiness to be every  
Lord's-day, and on all other Occasions, one of the most Regular  
and Comfortable Congregations, that I know, for the benefit of

For I speak nothing of, but upon my Kneeling and Obser-  
vation, that it is a great blessing, which almost all Ministers claim  
and are full of, but a Clergyman ought to claim his share  
too, that incurs the imputation of it, there is nothing more my  
friend, on which I am confident you will be let; indeed I  
to a Nation, and therefore I hope you will believe me, in all

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Your most faithful Obedient Servant

Richard Fildes

## Psalm, 56. 7.

*Who stilleth the noise of the Seas, the noise of the Waves,  
and the madness of the People.*

**T**He Principles of *Atheism* are given up by all Philosophers as *Untenable*. And if God made the World, there are invincible reasons, from the ends of his making it, to show that he governs it, especially mankind, who are at once the most needful, and the most noble objects of his Government.

The Question is, whether God, in the course of his Providence, act only in Pursuance of certain General and Uniform Laws, or by immediate, and particular Wills.

That he Proceeds in the latter Way, both with Respect to his Government of the Material and Moral World, I think I have sufficient reason to determin from the Authority of the Royal Prophet, in these words, who, to convince us more Effectually of a special Interposing Providence, instances in two Acts of it, which of all others are the least accountable from any Phenomena of Natural or Moral Causes; and therefore are immediately to be ascrib'd to him, who has all the Power of motion, and hearts of men in his hand.

*Who stilleth the Noise of the Seas, the noise of the Waves, and the madness of the People.*

So that the truth I shall endeavour to Establish, and confirm from these Words, and what I doubt not, was the sense of Holy *David* in them, is this, that God in the Government of Mankind, Acts by immediate, and particular Wills.

*First*, In the Government of Nature, or the Material World. One would think an Argument upon this principle needless, but a late specious Hypothesis, which I take to be of ill Consequence to Religion, has engag'd me in it. 'Tis pretended, that God Almighty form'd a Design of Creating the World, and having a perfect view of all possible means of executing his design, in a way most worthy of him, ought to proportion his work to his

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wisdom,

wisdom, and to lay down such a Simple and uniform Scheme of it; that the great Machin he was about to Erect, should Regularly perform all its motions, without his interposing every moment to direct or vary them; as Mechanicks are forc'd to do with Artificial movements.

In proportion to the Wisdom, the less complicated are the Wills of any Agent; 'tis the Character of Foresight and Penetration, to form and proceed to the execution of our Designs, without Embarrassing them, and obliging our selves on every Occasion to take new Measures.

Few Persons will entertain any great Opinion of the Prudence of that Man, who builds or Plants, and yet is continually altering the Modell of his House or Garden, and proceeds by no settled Rule, or Method in his Contrivance.

And if God, when he had made the World, and Establish'd certain Laws of Motion, must yet be conceiv'd at every turn to interpose in the Regulation of them, what will become of the Wisdom, and Perfection of his Nature, or how shall we reconcile such a conduct with the *Idea* of a Being, who at one view takes in all possible means of Effecting his Designs, in the most admirable and Exquisite manner: This being the principal Objection against the Proposition, I have laid down, I shall endeavour to confute it, *First*, by exposing the Error, and in consequence of it, *2ly* by considering the Effects of the Fall, and *3ly* by showing, that the whole Tenor of the Scriptures is on that Side of the Question, I have undertaken to defend.

*First*, This Objection is fallacious, 'ts a Sophism, as Logicians term it, of imperfect Enumeration: it proceeds wholly upon a Consideration of the Divine Wisdom in the Creation of the World, without regard to his other Attributes, or the ends he had in Creating it; had there been no communication of Motions betwixt Bodys and Spirits, or betwixt the Natural and Moral World; the Wisdom of God, abstractedly consider'd, ought perhaps to have settled such a constant, and uniform order, as is contended for; so that Matter and Motion being set to work, they might have gone Regularly on, without his interposition, but God having rais'd this noble Fabrick, not merely for the Manifestation of his Wisdom in the Art and Contrivance of it, but of his Goodness and many times his Justice too, in adapting the Motions of it, to the state and condition of free Agents; if these Ends cannot be attained, without his Interposing by particular



particular Wills, then 'tis no defect in his Wisdom to do it; on the other hand, 'twould rather be a reproach to his Wisdom, for the sake of the regularity of his Work, to lose the most beneficial and considerable ends of it.

Now nothing in the World seems more obvious, than that a General Law cannot be suited to accidentall Emergencys, and particular cases, or, in other Words, that brute and Insensate matter, whose motions are suppos'd Immutably fixed and determin'd, cannot accomodate it self to the several Exigencys of free, and mutable Agents, so as to become the proper instruments of Reward and Punishments to them.

They, who are in the contrary Hypothesis, do in Effect confess this, when they tell us, that God, upon certain Extraordinary occasions, may, without Derogating from the Wisdom of his Conduct, exert a miraculous and supernatural Power, which is a tacit Confession at least, that we ought not to form an *Idea* of the Wisdom of God, merely from the Simplicity of his Laws, and the Regularity of his Work, but from the Ends and uses, he proposes to serve by it.

Now the Government, and good of Mankind being the great ends of the divine œconomy, and to which all other Laws ought to give place, God may be induc'd in innumerable Cases, and in favour of innumerable particular Persons, to vary or suspend the general Laws of Motion. A General by whom He has some great designs of his providence to serve, is preserv'd in surprising manner; God covers his Head in the day of Battel, in the midst of dangers, and the Instruments of Death, *Tho' a Thousand fall besides him, and Ten Thousand at his right Hand.*

A Person of Eminent Parts and Piety, whose Service the Church stands in need of, escapes an Epidemical infection, he is Exempted from the common malignity of the Pestilence, *that walketh in Darknes, and from the Sicknes that Destroyeth at Noon-day.*

The Order of Providence, which is God's Principal design, Requires, that such Persons should be distinguish'd in common Dangers and Calamitys; but according to the Order of Nature, a Cannon Ball, or a Pestilentiall vapour, neither knows, nor can make any such Distinction; we should therefore according to the Sense of the wisest of Men, and the Historys of all Ages, ascribe such signal Deliverances to the special favour and protection of Heaven; Indeed particular persons whatsoever Character they

ustain, are only to be sav'd, in general Calamity's, by paticular Providences.

And herein the Divine conduct is highly agreeable to the natural Reason and Practis of Mankind. All wise men postpone a less to a Greater, and more Noble Design; and the wisdom of God obliges him, for ends superiour to the Order of nature, to alter or suspend the ordinary course of it.

If it be said, this will introduce a constant series of Miracles, I shall not contest much about words. Miracles are God's reserv'd Prerogative, which he never makes use of, but upon very Extraordinary occasions, and that without the Concurrence and Subserviency of Second Causes; So that his action is always visible in them, and particularly designed to be so; but in the Ordinary course of his Providence, he directs and Assists nature in a way more agreeable, and which offers less violence, to the visible order of it; but we have no less reason, as I shall make appear afterwards, to believe his special Interpositions becaus his Operation in them does not always Strike out Senses. We find, in a Thousand instances we have a Power our selves, to stop, or return, or hasten the Motion of Bodys, or to alter the Direction of their Motion; shall we deny this power to God, who moves them? The best Philosophers being now compell'd to resolve all motion into his immediate impulse; or shall we deny this power to those superior, Ministerial Agents, God may Employ to this end; for what Reason?

Secondly, That God Acts by particular Wills, appears from the effects of the Fall: The Work of an infinitely Wise and Powerfull Being ought in it self consider'd, to have no defects; but the World, as appears from Monstrous Productions, abortive Births, and other disorders of Nature, is not without them: What shall we ascribe these Irregularity's to? To the Simplicity of the Laws of Motion? If so, they would have happen'd had not Mankind Sin'd, and by this means Innocent Persons had Suffer'd, without their Demerits which is Contrary to Order, and some of the most clear and Distinct Ideas, we have of the Divine Attributes.

We must therefore attribute these Evils of Punishment to the Positive Will of God; and the Curse which the sin of Man provok'd him to inflict on his Works. This change of the Primitive Order, and Institution of Nature is not only evident from Scripture; but has been observ'd by those who understood not the reasons of it; Phylosophers could not reconcile it with the honour

honour of the Deity, that he should dismiss a work from his hands, wherein they thought, there were such Manifest marks of Imperfection. 'Twas to little purpos to ascribe the disorders of Nature to the Sins of Men, as natural Effects and Consequence of it; they must have been very hard put to't, to discover the connection betwix *Hurricanes* and *Earthquakes*, and the violent, and Irregular motions of our Appetites. 'Twould puzzle us extremely to show, that because *Adam* Eat of the forbidden Fruit, therefore Beasts immediately withdrew their Subjection, and were dispos'd to Feed, and prey upon one another this is to push the consequences of the Fall too far. 'Tis much more reasonable to impute these deviations from the first Order of Nature to the Mosaick Account, and the special Malediction of Heaven. Which by the way, seems a good Argument, that God does not by a fix'd and Determinate Law, dispose the Order of things, for the Punishment of free Agents, before they have Actually merited such Punishment. I observe this because great pains have been taken to show, that the Deluge, according to the Establish'd course of things, must inevitably have happen'd, at the time and in the manner it did, which supposes, God had laid a fix'd and Immutable Scheme for the Destruction of Mankind, before he Created them, and, which they might not have Deserv'd. 'Tis true God Almighty foresee their demerits, but this does not altogether reconcile a Stated and Predetermin'd punishment with the Liberty of a free Agent; a great many difficulties might be urg'd against such a Procedure, which 'tis not Easy to surmount, 'tis more Human at lest, and level to the Apprehensions of Men, to suppose God proceeds in bringing the Deluge, as he did in bringing the Curse upon the Earth, and that is by an Immediate and particular change of the Order of Nature.

'Tis said indeed, and may be urg'd in favour of the contrary Opinion, that the Effects of the Curse did not take place till the time of the Deluge; that, 'twas the great fecundity of the Earth, which contributed so much to the Luxury and Corruption of it's Inhabitants; as if there were not temptations enough to sin in a Degenerate World, besides those Arising from Ease and Plenty. But this notion is directly contrary to the Mosaick Account, of the Fall, it appears from it, that the execution of the Curse Immediately follow'd the Sentence. *When thou tillest the Ground says God to Cain, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee*

*her Strength.* Now, tho' we ought not to envy Men the ingenuity of their Theorys and Speculations, yet if we allow God may recede from the the Laws, on any occasion, why not upon so Extrordinary an event, as the Extirpation of the whole Race of Mankind, from the Face of the Earth, but one Family only.

But whether the Disorders of Nature are to be imputed to the Fall, as moral or natural Effects of it; 'tis visible, things are in a disorderly State, this is the most reasonable account of the words of the Apostle, *That the whole Creation groaneth, and Travell-eth in Pain.* Rom. 8, 22, *ver.* There is not now, that Harmonious Communication of the Motions of Bodys, which was Originally Establish'd, but things are very much out of their natural State, and Scituation, and indeed 'twill be hard to assign any tollerable Reason, or end of Providence in Pestilence, Famine, and Earthquakes, but in consequence of the Fall. Now upon this supposition, that things are in a disorderly state; God may not only highly consistent with the Wisdom of God, but his goodness seems in a peculiar manner to oblige him to prevent, by particular Wills, the Effects of these disorders upon good Men; and to exempt them, from those common Calamities, which were instituted only for the punishment of sin.

To this it may be Objected, that the Laws whereby the World is Govern'd, being uniform and General, and every way suited to the dignity of their Author, they must necessarily be attended with unhappy consequences with respect to particular Men; and 'tis thought no reflection on the goodness or Justice of Human Legislators, that the Effects of their Laws fall heavy on certain Persons, besides the Intention of them; 'tis sufficient to answer, that Human Legislators cannot foresee all the Particular grievances of General Laws, if they could, Justice would Oblige them to make particular clauses and exceptions, in favour of the Persons agriev'd; I shall conclude the Argument with applying this to the conduct of God, whose Wisdom directs him to make use of the most Simple, General and Comprehensive Laws, but always in a way congruous to the rest of his glorious Attributes, and worthy of him.

I proceed in the 3d. place, to consider the Sense, and Authority of the Holy Scriptures in this Argument; which indeed abounds with so many plain, and full proofs of the Truth, I am asserting, that there is no possible Answer to be given to them,



them, but by saying, they are so many Anthropologys, whereby God Almighty accomodates himself to the Common Notions, and apprehensions of Men, which is an Argument, that this Principle, is founded at once in the natural Sence, and Reason of Mankind, and agreeable to the Intention of God in Holy Writ. So that Supposing the contrary Hypothesis to be true, I think Philosophers ought to keep it to themselves; those especially, who profess any veneration for the divine Oracles, or the Wisdom of God in them.

The design of the Holy Scripture is to quicken our Faith, and inflame our devotions towards God; who does not perceive these Graces will be most naturally and effectually excited in us, if we believe God acts by Special Interpositions of his Providence, and that he has reserv'd to himself a Power over second causes, to regulate, or restrain their Influences, as he sees fit; if we be firmly Establish'd in this belief, the Reasons of Prayer and Devotion are not only Plain, and level to our apprehensions, but the Motives to them Irresistible; and perhaps there is no better account to be given of the general Indevotion of Men, than that they are not fully convinc'd of this Important Truth. 'Tis a just and pertinent Remark *Suetonius* makes on the Emperour *Tiberius circa Deos, & religiones negligentior erat, quippe addictus Mathematicæ, persuasionisq; plenus omnia fato agi.* and indeed if all Effects come to pass by 'a fatal, and fix'd chain of Natural Causes, 'twill be hard to evince the necessity of Prayer to Christians, as a means of averting any Evil, or deriving any Blessing upon them: Nay upon this persuasion, (which has always been so justly Suspected of Irreligion) it seems not only vain, but impious for a Man under any Mortal distemper to pray to God to deliver him from the Effects of it, or to give any Efficacy to the medicine he takes, seeing in order to this, God must change the settled and general Method of his acting, wick suppos'd consistent with his Wisdom, and *repugnant* to his decrees for him to do, and consequently inconsistent with that profound Honour and Regard we owe to his Attributes, for us to ask.

'Tis to remove a Principle, which so directly tends to impiety, but which lyes at the Bottom of the Hearts of too many Men, that God in Scripture represents himself as doing whatever is done by the mediation of second Causes; and as Assisting our Prayers not by any disposition of Mechanical Laws,  
upon

upon the foresight of them, which is altogether inconceivable; but by immediate executive Acts of his Power. 'Tis the Lord that killeth and maketh alive, 'tis he that bringeth down to the Grave and bringeth up: 1 Sam. 2. 'Tis he that bleisseth Men, with the Fruits of their Labours and endeavours in the Field, and in every thing they put their hand unto. Dut. 12. 18. 'Tis he that considereth the Poor, and delivereth him in time of Trouble, that preserveth and keepeth him alive, that bleisseth him upon the Earth, and delivereth him not into the hand of his Enemies, that strengtheneth him upon his Bed of Languishing, and maketh all his Bed in his Sickness. Psal. 41. 1. 2. 3. In a Word 'tis he that Directs the order of those things which are the most casual and fortuitous, and the disposition, whereof seems wholly to depend upon the Arbitrary choice, and wills of Men, as the casting of lots, or drawing them forth, *The lot is cast into the Lap, but the whole disposing is of the Lord.* Pro. 16. 1. 'Twill be hard to explain these passages in an intelligible manner, much more to discover the Wisdom, and design of them, but upon the Principle I am Maintaining.

If it be said, that in the ordinary course of things, we see no motions communicated to Bodys, but according to the Established Laws of Nature; I answer, God would have Faith in Men to be the Effect of choice, and not of an invincible force upon their senses, and therefore tho' we do not see his action in the overruling dispensations of his Providence, we have no less reason to believe it; on that account, particularly, as to his Governing the Operations and directing the Influence of those things, the Springs of whose motion lye more remote from human Knowledge and Observation; as of the Rain, the Wind, and the Seas; Concerning which, the Providence of God in Scripture is represented more particularly conversant, and employ'd, and the greatest difficultys in natural Philosophy propos'd. Thus Job. 28. 6. *Hast thou entered into the Springs of the Sea, or hast thou walk'd in the search of the depth, and not only in the words of my Text, but Psal. 89. The Psalmist magnifies it, as a special act of the Divine Power and Providence that he calms the Rage of the Seas, when no visible, (and perhaps after all the efforts of Philosophy no natural cause,) can be Assign'd, for their suddain recess. O Lord God of Hosts, who is a Strong Lord, like unto thee or thy Faithfulness round about thee, thou rulest the raging of the Seas, when the Waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.* Particular-  
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ly: as to the Winds, our Lord himself has Determind, that the motions of it are not to be accounted from any known Natural Principle. *The Wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh or where it goeth.* Joh. 3. 8. The same difficultys may be observ'd concerning the Clouds and the Rain. *Job* pnts it as an insuperable one, *Cb: 36. 29. Can any understand the spreading of the Clouds?* Indeed the best account natural Philosophy has given us of this matter seems to leave it a problem still: After all, the fine sphaerical Bubbles, which are said to compose the Clouds, and the Subtle Spirituous matter inclos'd in them, 'twill be hard to Demonstrate, that the Air they Swim in, is not Specifically lighter, especially when 'tis much Rarify'd. And therefore *Job*, who had Doubtless a great Insight into the secrets of Nature, chose rather to resolve the suspensions of the Clouds, in a medium less Gross, than themselves into the immediate Action of God. *He bindeth up the Waters, says he, in his thick Clouds, and the Cloud's is not Rent, under them.* Job. 26. 8. However this be, we are assur'd, God in a peculiar manner Appropriates to himself the disposition of all the Rain, that falls upon the Earth. *Lev. 26.* He promisses the *Jews*, *he will give them Rain in due Season*, accordingly he tells them by the Prophet *Joel. 2. 23. That he hath given them the former Rain moderately, and will cause to come down for them Rain, the former Rain, and the latter Rain,* on the other hand, 'tis he that withholdeth the Showers. *Jer. 3. 3. And Shutteth up Heaven that there be no Rain,* 2 *Chron: 7. 13.* So peculiar is the Prerogative of God, in the distribution of the Rain, that the Prophet seems to exclude even Secondary and natural Causes from contributing any way towards it. *Are there, says he any among the vanities of the Gentiles, the Celestial Bodies that can cause Rain; for so he Explains himself in the next Words, or can the Heavens give showers, art thou not he O Lord God, therefore we will wait on thee.* Jer. 14, 22.

But it is said, if God in the Government of nature Acted by particular Wills, all events would bear the Character of his Action; He would never do any thing unnecessary and Superfluous, or to no purpose, for Instance, if he should immediately cause the Clouds to Rain, the water would only fall where 'tis needfull to fructify the Earth, or is Commodious to it's Inhabitants, but not on Houses or Highways- or Places, where 'tis Superfluous this is no new Objection, 'tis as Old as *Job: That God should cause to Rain on the Earth, where no Man is on the Wildriness, where*



in there is no Man. Job. 38. 26. But to this we are able to give a satisfactory, and particular Answer: Besides we cannot Comprehend all the Motives upon which the most perfect Being Acts, and that 'tis Impious to Assert any Event useless, because we Perceive not all the Ends, and uses of it; besides this, I say, there are very Wise, and particular Reasons to show, why God in the fall of the Rain, and other Providential Dispensations, does not make so Visible and Remarkable a Distinction, as the Objection Supposes requisite, namely, as I intimated before, that such a constant series of Miracles, would be two great a Byass on the liberty of human Actions, destroy the Merit of Faith, and be contrary to that superior Order, God has Establish'd for the Government of the Moral World; which is to perswade Men, but not irresistibly to overrule their Choice: Upon others perhaps such Miraculous and Extraordinary Methods would have different Effects, 'twould put Philosophical heads on forming new Schemes and Theorys to account for them, upon Mechanical Principles; which some Atheistical Wits have attempted to resolve Miracles into, notwithstanding their infrequency and Paucity of their Number: but if Miracles were frequent, and came down in showers of Rain or Hail, they would more Apparently lose their Force and Efficacy, and the Power, God hath reserved to himself to Signify his Will, and Pleasure by them in a Peculiar manner, for the confirmation of the Truth, or the Conviction of Infidels, would be render'd Insignificant, if Men won't be Perswaded by certain Miraculous facts, that happen very rarely, and upon particular reason and Occasions, their would be less hopes of Removing their Prejudices, if such Facts occur'd every day, they might then have some better Pretence to Ascribe them to the Laws of Mechanism, or certain unknown Combinations of Matter, and Motion, which has at once a very good Argument, for God's Confirming any Revelation or Particular Commission from him by Miracles; and for is ceasing, or discontinuing the Power of Miracles, when once such a Confirmation is made. The most considerable Authority I know of, which is urg'd from Scripture in Favour of the contrary Hypothesis is that of the *Psalms*. 148. 6. Where God is said to have given Natural Bodys such a Law as *shall not be broken*. But there is no difficulty in giving a Solution to these Words, they are, as appears from the Context, principally to be understood of God's preserving the Caelestial Bodys, particularly the Sun and Moon in their Proper State, and Order; but not of his overruling their  
Motions,



Motions, and influences; to explain the Words in this sence, would be contrary, (as I hope, I have Sufficiently made appear) to the General current, and Design of the Scriptures.

I proceed in the second place to show, that God acts by particular Wills, in the Government of the Moral World, But this I shall not long Insist upon: All Pagan, as well as Christian Theology, and Religion suppose and proceed upon it, the Government of the *Jews*, what is it for so many years but a continued Theocracy? wherein God Almighty determin'd the Succession of their Princes, presidid in their Counsels, and went forth with their Armys, but their was one special, and standing Monument of his Residence among them, which I cannot omit Observing to you, and that was protecting them from the incursions of their Enemys, when their Males went up, at three stated times of the Year, to Worship. What was it that Restrain'd the Enemys of *Israel*, when they knew the Nakedness of their Land, from makeing a descent upon it? The Nations that us'd to meet the Armys of the living God in the Field, decline the Advantage of Entering an open, a Defenceless, and adjoining Country; to what shall we Impute a conduct, so Irreconcilible with the settled Maxims of human Wisdom, and Policy? to what? But to the special Interposition of the Supreme Diety; *Who does according to his will among the Inhabitants of the Earth.* Dan. 4. 35. *And who boweth when he sees fit, the Hearts of a whole Nation or People as the Heart of one Man,* the 2 Sam. 19, 14.

And indeed if God do not overrule the Inclinations and Designs, and Actions of Men, 'twill be hard to give any Tolerable, or intelligible account of several Texts of Scripture. *Solomon* who seems to have design'd nothing more, than to Establish the belief of a particular Providence, tells us, *that the preparation of the Heart is of the Lord, and that the Answer of the Tongue is of the Lord.* Prov. 6. 1st. and Verse the 3d. *'Tis the Lord that Establisheth the thoughts,* and Verse the 9th. *A Man's heart divideth his Way, but the Lord directeth, his steps.* And again, Chap. 20. 24. *Man's goings are of the Lord, he directs our Motions to Ends and Events we never thought of, how then can a Man understand his own Way:* 'T would be as endless to Cite Human Authors to this purpose. *Cicero*, who understood, and spoke the Sence of Human nature, as well as any one of them lays it down as a General, and Fundamental Rule; *Sit hoc a Principio persuasum Homini bus, Dominos esse omnium Rerum, et moderatores Deos, eaq; quæ Queruntur; eorum gerit*

*ditione, ac numine*: And else where, that without the special Communications and Influx of Heaven, no Man ever reach'd any extraordinary Excellency, in any kind. *Nemo unquam Vir magnus extitit sine aliquo Divino numinis Afflatu.*

But having insisted so long upon my former Particular, I shall not pursue this Argument, (which I wish there were no Occasion for any further) but Proceed to make some Seasonable inferences from it.

And first, If God Interpose by Particular Wills, in the Government of Mankind, Princes upon whose Administration, the interest of human Society, more immediately depends, must be Esteem'd the Peculiar Charge of his Providence, not only, as to his protecting them from visible Dangers, and unseen Accidents, and Conspiracys, which the Annals of all Government's afford us signal Instances of; but what I more particularly intend here, 'tis Inspiring them with Heroick motions, and Resolutions; and his directing or infatuating their Counsels, as he sees fit. So the wisest of Princes tells us, that, *The Kings heart is in the Hand of the Lord, as the Rivers of Water he turneth it whither soever he will.* Prov. 21. 1. And Chap. 16. 10. *A Divine Sentence is in the Lips of the King.* Which tho it be a very bad Argument of the *Romish* Doctors for the infallibility of the Pope, 'tis an Excellent Instruction to Princes to Pursue the Paths of Virtue, and Religion, and Imply's at least to such as do, a liberal Promise of God's Inspiring them in a Singular manner, with the Spirit of Government. Such was that Spirit, which came upon *Saul*, when he was Anointed King, which Directed *Solomon* in his Determination, concerning the true Mother of the Child, and what *David* upon his great Offence, *Psal. 51. 12th.* Is Suppos'd to pray for the Restitution of.

'Tis to be ascrib'd to the conduct of this Spirit, that Her Majesty had no sooner Ascended the Throne, but a visible Success attended Her in all Her Consultations at Home, and Her Operations abroad. So that we soon Observ'd a General and happy turn of Affairs to the Advantage of our Allyes, the Mortification of the Common Enemy, and the Glory of *England*; these were Visible Effects of the Favour of Heaven upon her Majestys Administration and Arms; being indeed Effects, when we consider'd the United Powers of *France* and *Spain*, beyond Visible Causes, beyond our Hopes, and the Fears of our Enemy's; and in one Action particularly, consider'd in all it's Circumstances, (except-

( except those, wherein God so signally fought the Battles of *Israel*, ) beyond Examples, tho' it ought not to Obscure the Glory of that Gallant Action, whereof we now rejoyce,

Let us Rejoyce in hope that the same Spirit will preside in Her Majesty's counsels of State and Warr, while she sits upon the Throne of Her Fathers. If we cannot always Penetrate into the Motives of Her conduct, let us acquiesce in the Submission, that is due to those who represent the Sovereign Power; Princes may have Wise Reasons for the Measures they take, tho, those Reasons do not appear to us. 'Twas never the Character of Church Men to Entertain Jealousys and Suspicious, much less to Foment them, and give Umbrage to the Government. Tho one would Imagin by the Violent and Virulent Manner, where with the Church is so Openly Insulted, that Church Men and Phanaticks had chang'd sides with respect to their Notions of Government and Principles of Obedience.

This appears Particularly from a Libel, call'd an Answer to the Memorial of the Church of *England*; wherein every Man is Represented as an Enemy to the Government, to Her Majesty, and the Protestant Succession, that the Libeller is pleas'd to Term a high Church-Man; and every Man is in Direct Terms represented a high Church-man, that Assents to, or Approves the fifth Canon of our Church, that is ( or I am sure ought to be ) every Minister of it, that is not Guilty of Collusion and a prevarication he is asham'd to own; So that by this account, Her Majesty has not one conscientious Clergyman in the Kingdom, that ought to have the Benefit of her Protection: were such a sorry Answer worth the Notice of the Church of *England*, it deserves the same Treatment the Memorial met with.

But I hope we are not to be Banter'd out of a Principle, the Church has always Distinguish'd it self upon; or out of those just hopes we have of Her Majesty's Designs, for the Benefit and Glory of it; Her known Affection to the Church before Her Accession to the Crown, in times when it was most Dangerous to own it, and the Royal Assurances of Favour to it since, are incontestable proofs of the Sincerity of Her Designs. Her Majesty will never forget a Promise, which Her faithful Subjects, and Sons of the Church of *England*, will always think themselves oblig'd to Remember.

Secondly, From what hath been said we have an Excellent Argument to support us against the insults of Popular fury, and in-



fatuation God frequently opens the Eyes and turns the Heart of a People in the full Career of their Disorders: tho their Recovery is more hopeless, when they are under the Impressions of a Heady and Mistaken Zeal; when they confound the Names and Distinctions of Virtue and Vice. *Call Evil Good, and Good Evil, put Bitter for Sweet, and Sweet for Bitter:* A Man that thorough inadvertency, or being agitated with a violent Passion, Engages in a Criminal Action, is in a hopefull way of Repenting and Correcting himself when he comes to Consider; but when we do ill things under the Notion of doing God and Religion, our Friends and Country, good Service, here the Disease is more latent, and Difficultly removed, as being Seared both in the Will and Affections, and in an Erroneous Judgment, and therefore the great Deceiver of Mankind never puts them upon ill Designs, but he Colours them with specious Names, and Splendid appearances, and Gilds over the Fiend as it were with a Glory.

'Tis Wonderful to consider what great things have been done by the mere Twang of two or three good Words in the Mouths of Men, whose business was another thing. Reformation, Liberty, and Property, and the Work of the Lord, have been very Serviceable in their time, and in their Way; but they must all bow before the grave Can't of Moderation: By Virtue of this Jargon (which 'tis no hard matter to Decipher, but which serves well enough to Buble the Populace) Men of truly Christian and Charitable Principles, (by which I understand Moderation,) are dress'd up in the most Horrid and Frightful disguise of Violence, and Persecution, that our Venerable Mother seems almost at a loss to Distinguish her true and Genuine Sons, from a Spurious, and Forreign Brood, but there is certainly a medium betwixt a Sneaking and a Persecuting Spirit, and a Criterion to judge of it. Christianity at the same time it disposes us to all Offices of Charity, meekness, and Forbearance, Inspires us with a Spirit of Fortitude, and greatness of Mind, if nothing will content Men, but to make the Vertue of Moderation consist in Low and poor Submissions, in Sifling the Sentiments of Honour, and Conscience, and Gratitude, we shall not envy them the Character and Reputation of Moderate Men; Tho' in the true Notion of this Virtue, there is no Church in the World can put in so good a Claim, none of any Age, that in Condescension to the Prejudices of Men, ever suffer'd it's Doctrine and Discipline, to be so Openly and Publickly Affronted as the Church of England.

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'Tis an Objection our Adversarys with all their Artifices cannot get off, that they never discovered an equal Temper towards the Church when they had Power in their Hands: we have a Fresh but God knows a Melancholy instance of this in a Neighbouring Kingdom; and the same Principles will every where dispose Men to the Same Practicesses.

But while the Hearts of Men are in the hands of God, we have the less Reason to fear the Effects of Violence, and an intemperate Zeal; the *Psalmist* in the Words of my Text, makes it an Argument of equal Power to Calm the Rage of the Seas, and of an Infatuated People, but God has more than once Remarkably Interpo'd in favour of this Church, and Nation, to Stop the current of Popular Distractions, and when he sees good, can do it again.

*Thirdly*, If God in the Government of the Moral World Interpose by Particular Wills, we ought upon all Occasions to do our Duty, and to trust the Event to him: no Exigency of Affairs will Iustify our recourse to sinful Measures, neither are we to be Diverted from appearing in the necessary Defence of Truth and Religion, from any consideration of Interest, or the Iniquity of the Times: 'Tis no Wonder corrupt States men take their Ply fram such Considerations, they have done it in all Ages. But the great Scandal to Religion is, when Men who ought to Distinguish themselves by their Piety, fall in with such Vicious and loose Politicks; we are not to Tempt God by Dangerous and unnecessary expedients; but where the Honour and Interest of Religion, or the Prevention of Scandalous Arts and Practicesses, require proper Measures, there lyes an Obligation upon us to them, and while we act Conscientiously, we have a much surer Anchor of hope in the Divine Providence than in the Trickish Arts, and Subter fuges of the most Cunning Men: Corrupt Politicks may succeed for a time, but pure und undefil'd Religion is a safe and Stable Foundation to Build our Hopes of Peace and Prosperity upon; tho were this a fals Maxim no Objection against acting upon a Principle of Conscience, is of any weight to a Christian: Were it a good Plea, that the times, or other Secular views, will not bear a faithful discharge of our Dnty, Christianity had betn stifled in it's infancy; and if it do not still raise us, above such low Regards, we had better be silent, as to the Power and Efficacy of it.

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There was no Person Condescended more to the Prejudices of the times, and the Impressions of a misguided Zeal, than the great Apostle *St. Paul*, yet he was so far from thinking it a Toleration to convenient Compliances, that the times would come, wherein Men would not bear sound Doctrine *2 Tim. 4. 3.* That for this very Reason he charges *Timothy* in the most awfull, and solemn manner, *before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, that he Preach the word, that he be instant in Season and out of Season*; whatever Difficultys or Opposition he might meet with; *that he Reprove rebuke Exhort*; there is a Season for bearing with Men in their Errors in Indifferent things, and while they Act upon the Principle of a well meaning, tho' Erroneous Conscience. But there is no Season for Hypocrisy and Prophaness, or for the Violation of the most Sacred Institutions of Religion, and Religious Tests or for Tolrating Men in them: If it be our Duty at all times to Rebuke such Offences, no time can be Inexpedient for Authority to Restrain them.

'Tis very hard, that worthy Members of our Church, for acting Conformably to this Apostolical Charge, are represented under abusive Characters, and Invidious Names of Distinction; not that there is, we hope, any such Grounds for the Distinction as our Adversarys would have us think and please themselves with the thoughts of; the Business of the Discriminating Names, contriv'd by Ill Men to Create misunderstandings among us, is to Point out those, who were for, or against a Law, which generally was acknowledged Reasonable, on both sides: the main Objection lay against some Particular hardships of it. Others thought Indulgence to the Dissenters the only means to mollify, them and bring them to a Temper of Consideration, of which we have seen no great Effects, where we seem'd to have had the best Expectations of that kind; we ought not however to conclude from either of these Reasons, that all those who went upon them had designs to the Prejudice of the Church; nothing can be more unjust, than such an Imputation: Persons may have the same Ends, tho' they cannot agree about the means of coming at them. If there be any, that desire to go into the Distinction of Low Church, upon Ill designs of Reducing the Church to a Level, in favour of a Faction, or to show their Gratitude to it, or out of an Inclination to Embroyl themselves, we hope they are Inconsiderable for their number, the Church does not stand in need of Men of Turbulent Spirits. Just reasoning is a much bet-

ter Qualification for her Service, than Noise, and Harangue. But as to the main Body of our Clergy and Layety, we Presume they have their Eyes open; and are both so Wise and Conscientious as not to be Impos'd upon, and alienated in their Tempers, and Affections, by a sett of unhappy equivocal Distinctions, contriv'd on purposs to Foment Enmity, and Division among them.

I shall conclude all with the Excellent Collect of our Church, *O Lord we beseech, let thy continual Pity cleanse and defend thy Church, and because it cannot continue in safety without thy Succour, preserve it evermore by thy help and Goodness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

FINIS.

for Qualification for her Service, than Noise, and Harangue. But as to the main Body of our Clergy and Laity, we presume they have their Eyes open; and are both to Wit and Conscience, as not to be imposed upon, and allured in their Tempers, and Affections by a sort of unhappy equivocal Distinctions, contrived on purpose to foment Enmity, and Division among them.

I shall conclude all with the Excellent Collect of our Church, O Lord we beseech, let thy continual Piety cleanse and defend thy Church, and because it cannot continue in safety without thy Successors; preserve it evermore by thy help and Goodness, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

FINIS.



